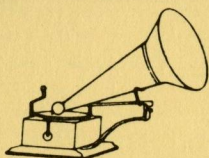


# Hillandale

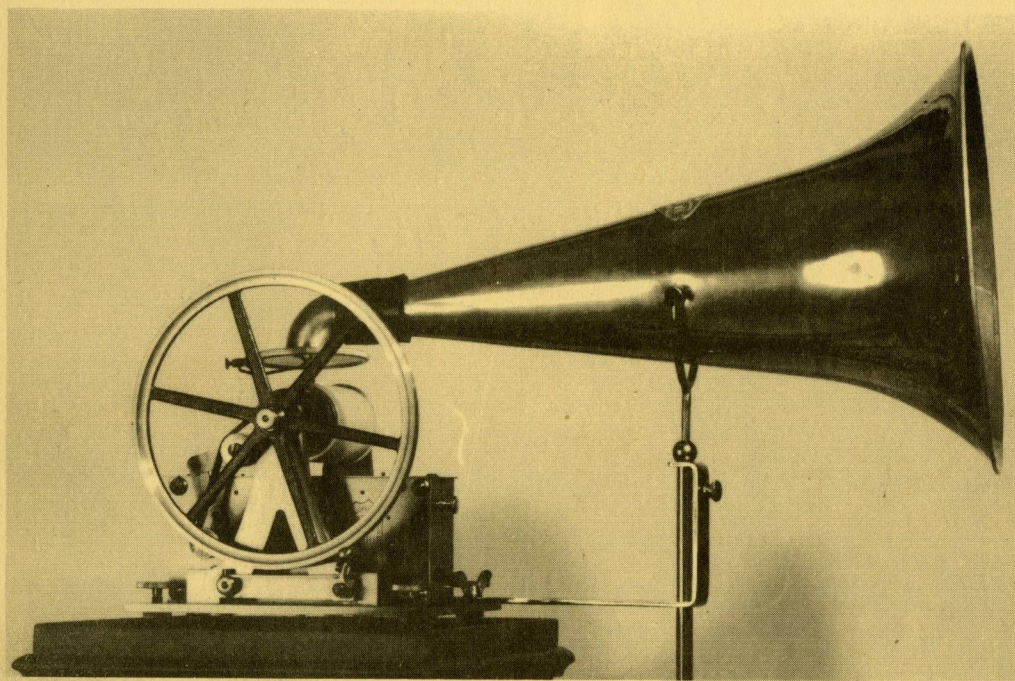


Journal of the  
City of London  
Phonograph and  
Gramophone Society

THE HILLANDALE NEWS

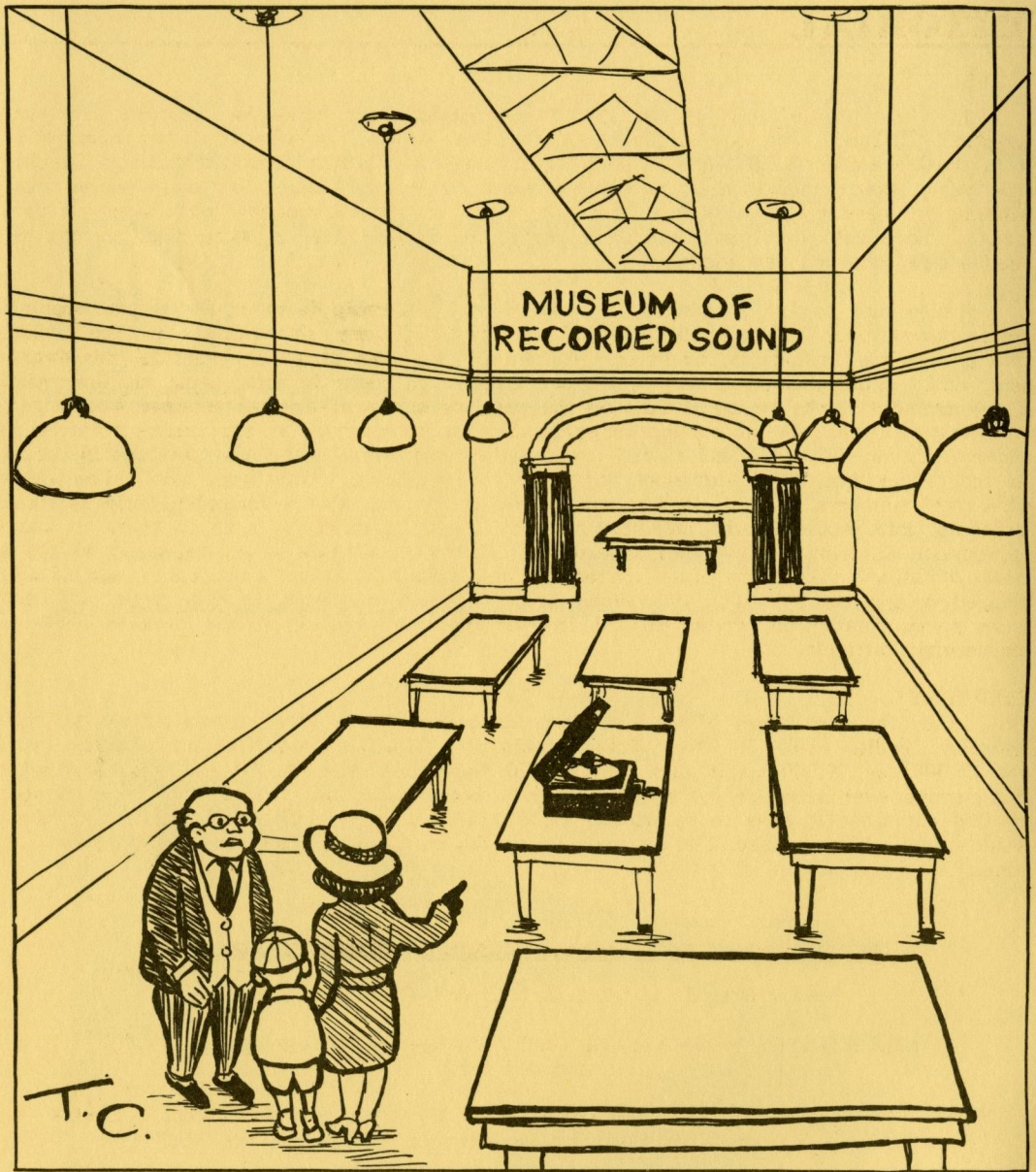
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Loiret 'Eureka' phonograph (Christie' South Kensington photo)





Well, yes, Madam, but we all have to start somewhere, don't we ?



# EDITORIAL

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This issue is the first of the 1985/6 subscription year (have you renewed your subscription?). Those who were present at the last A.G.M., or who read the minutes of it in the December magazine, will know that I shall be retiring from the chair in October this year, which means that members should be looking about for a successor now. Nominations have not exactly been flooding in so far, and the Society must have a Chairman. I have held the post for eleven years, and I think that is more than enough: we need a new face and new ideas.

I have not so far announced the end of my Editorship (a relatively recent appointment, dating back only to 1979), but I am aware of my shortcomings in this office. One or two correspondents, admittedly no more, have been at pains to ensure this awareness, and I could wish that they would set matters to right by nominating my successor. If any member thinks he could take on the task, or knows of another member who might, he should not be slow in coming forward. Do not be put off by the critics referred to above; they are few in number, and are largely confined to those who persistently refuse to understand that the Editor does not write the magazine. What goes into Hillandale is what the members of the Society contribute to it, and this presumably reflects those members' interests. If other members have different interests, it is up to them to make appropriate contributions. Often a letter of enquiry is all that is needed to spark off a train of information from other correspondents. What is more, as Editor I am always pleased to get short letters or articles which fill only a quarter or half page; as each issue nears completion, trying to fill in the gaps left by the longer articles becomes increasingly difficult.

## EVERPLAY?

Inside the back cover of the last issue was reproduced a 1924 advertisement for the Everplay needle. This, it was claimed, would play 27,000 records (curious number - why not 25,000, or 30,000?). It also had a '£20 Guarantee that it will not injure records'. Has anyone ever seen one of these needles? Better still, has anyone ever experimented to find out what it does to record No 27,001? Presumably it did not come in a tin (you would hardly have needed 200, or even half-a-dozen, if, as claimed, it lasted for a lifetime).

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## THE HILLANDALE NEWS

Official Journal of the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society  
(founded 1919)

EDITOR: Christopher Proudfoot, [REDACTED]

DISTRIBUTION: D.R.Roberts, [REDACTED]



## THE NIGHT CARUSO GOT THE BIRD

Colin Johnson

On a warm evening last summer I was cleaning a batch of newly-acquired records. I always wash my records, wax them and play them through with a fibre or thorn needle. I was just playing 'The Lost Chord' by Caruso on HMV DB 133 (you know, the 1912 recording of 'Seated one day at the horrrgan...') when I heard a bird singing. We haven't got a canary, our budgie died fifteen years ago, and I was certain it wasn't a recording of some long dead songster in the rafters of the Victor recording studio. I took the needle off the record and after a couple of seconds the song ended. Soundbox back on record, and the song resumed. I left Caruso spinning away and investigated outside, because it seemed the 'armonious echoes' were coming from the back garden. And sure enough, although it was around 10 p.m. and almost dark, the singing was coming from the direction of a large white-poplar tree, about a hundred and fifty feet away at the bottom of the garden. And the bird - obviously a nightingale - was enjoying the strains of Sullivan's doleful ballad as reproduced on my HMV 511 and wafting through the open windows.

I decided on an experiment. Nellie Melba was in the same batch as Caruso, so I dried her off, gave her a quick squirt of wax and buffed her up. Pff came 'The Lost Chord' and on went Melba's 1910 version of *Si, mi chiamano Mimi* on the doubled-up HMV DB 356. But the Australian Nightingale failed to impress the Kentish version and the result was a deafening silence from the poplar.

Off the turntable came Nellie and on went Amelita Galli-Curci with the 1919 recording of 'Lo, here the gentle lark', on yet another doubled-up red label, DB 256. Now I have always thought that larks and nightingales are pretty much the same ... after all, they are all birds. But my feathered friend obviously was not going to hob-nob with a common or garden lark. Dead silence from the poplar.

By this time I was getting a bit desperate. Then a flash of inspiration, and from my collection I withdrew HMV B 2853, which, as any of the great British collectors will tell you, is 'Nightingales and Beatrice Harrison playing "Songs my Mother taught me"'. Actually it's only Beatrice playing the 'cello, but the label does not make it too clear. A quick scrape of the needle on the Pointmaster and away went Beatrice, sawing away on her 'cello, recorded all those years ago. BUt nightingales or no, my 1984 bird refused to utter even one cheep.

Perhaps, I thought, it's that ruddy 'cello. After all, who in their right minds would want to try and sing with a bit of Dvorak floating across the garden. So out came B2469 'Nightingales actually recorded in Beatrice Harrison's Garden, Oxted', and not a 'cello in sight. Dead silence from the poplar.

At this point I was convinced that the bird in the tree had either flown off, dozed off with boredom at my choice of record or perhaps died from old age while I tried to remember exctly WHERE the various piles of records were kept. But no, another quick burst of Caruso and the nightingale started off again. I would have pursued the experiment further with, perhaps, a selection of the great Caruso's wide repertoire. But not all my neighbours keep my eccentric sleeping hours, and curtains in nearby bedrooms were beginning to twitch. I tried Enrico again on the next evening, but the nightingale had obviously decided to find the garden of someone with different musical tastes. I would be interested to hear of any similar experiences. Perhaps this summer we could conduct a controlled experiment and at a fixed time, all members of the CLPGS Caruso section will play DB 133 and note the reaction from the local birdlife.



The nomadic nature of the Chilterns Branch induced members to travel to enjoy the hospitality of Richard and Anne Scott at Grayshott in Surrey for the early Summer meeting. As at many such meetings the younger generation was much in evidence; they played with their toys while their betters (?) played with theirs! One of the more unusual grown up toys was a relative rarity brought along by one of the members- a Hiller talking clock. Unfortunately, and as usual, the celluloid sound track was useless and therefore could not "speak". An interesting talking machine but not a very attractive clock. The musical entertainment was provided by a small selection of Operatic Amberols played on a Edison 1A on which the voice of Selma Kurz singing the aria from "Lucia de Lammamoor" was thought to be particularly noteworthy.

The September meeting held at the country cottage of Leigh and Valerie Roberts near Chichester turned out to be something of a garden party thanks to the good weather. Leigh is an enthusiastic collector of Al.Bowly records and possesses some three or four hundred of his recordings. Many are merely labelled "Vocal Refrain" which must make it a bit difficult when hunting in junk shops and record bazaars. He could of course try a potential purchase on one of his many pristine portable gramophones which were arranged in a beautiful and comprehensive display. These machines are considered by some to be a little down market, but there is much technical and historical merit in them and at least they are comparatively cheap! A lovely day much enjoyed by all - many thanks to the Roberts.

In contrast, the snow was falling when members made their way in January to Steve Jellyman's new home at Bourne End. However in spite of the weather about 18 members arrived for a gathering steeped in nostalgia for the forties. A splendid vintage Wurlitzer was an eye catching exhibit, which for all its gaudy decor, reproduced the sweetness of Glenn Miller or the foot warming rhythm of Muggsy Spanner better than many a more "serious" machine. The fidelity has no doubt been improved by replacing the original half pound pick-up with a light ceramic cartridge - at least the shellac suffers less. Notable among the items brought for inspection were John Smith's beautifully made and suitably Germanic house for a Polyphon disc movement and Richard Scott's hand cranked phonograph which plays 2 minute cylinders on a vertical mandrel. After tea, which included a birthday cake for Steve decorated with a miniature gramophone (what else) a selection of cylinders played on some fine Edison machines was followed by a demonstration of Steve's collection of optical and mechanical diversions including the now legendary Japanese Flycatcher!

The Midlands Branch held its AGM in January when Chairman Eddie Dunn reviewed activities in 1984. Although he felt it had been a good year, he exhorted members to do even better and hoped the more reticent could be persuaded to give a talk. The existing committee was re-elected en bloc and some of next year's events were discussed and the dates fixed. There being no official programme to follow the AGM, various machines were brought along for inspection and discussion. One was a brown HMV portable - thought to be unusual as no one had seen that colour before.

There have been three meetings of the East Fife Branch since the last report. In December, ten Decca portables were on display with exhibits ranging from the "Trench" model to the later model 33. Assorted soundboxes were fitted and the comparison of an early Telesmatic (mica) soundbox with a later Paillard (metal diaphragm) type produced interesting results. No two boxes sound exactly alike which makes the study of acoustic gramophones so fascinating. Following the January meeting in which the sound quality of various old and new machines was compared, the February meeting was devoted to the transference of 78 rpm records to tape. The importance of stylus dimension was stressed when trying to get the best signal to noise ratio.



On July 6th 1973, the world of music lost a unique, irreplaceable and physically towering figure: that of Otto Klemperer.

He was born in Breslau on May 14th 1885 into a poor, Jewish family - not a good combination for success in times of widespread anti-semitism. However, young Otto, although ungainly and rather clumsy, wanted to be a concert pianist and mastered the keyboard technique to a high standard. Public performances were too much for his nerves, and his career as an instrumental soloist had to be abandoned.

At the age of twenty-one he had his first experience as a conductor. He had taken the post of accompanist under Oscar Fried. After a performance of Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Fried and the leading lady had an argument, the conductor's position became vacant and producer Max Reinhardt said "All right, we'll use Klemperer." Gustav Mahler heard him conduct *Orpheus* and thanks to the composer's assistance, Klemperer led orchestras in Prague and Hamburg. His successes included *Rigoletto* and *Carmen* with Caruso.

When the Nazis came to power they issued a warrant for Klemperer's arrest, stating that his "whole outlook ran counter to German thought and feeling". He fled from Germany with his wife (soprano Johanna Giesler) and family. He was principal conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic between 1933 and 1939, but in 1938 he began to have difficulties with his balance. He underwent an operation to remove a brain tumour which left the conductor partly paralysed and unable to use a baton in his right hand.

Klemperer had been subject to manic depression for many years, and his disability and the fact that he could not secure a permanent job with an orchestra caused his outlook to look more bleak than ever.

After the war his popularity had a glorious revival but in 1951 disaster struck again, this time in the form of a serious fall which caused a shattered hip. Eight months later he began work with the Philharmonia in London. Klemperer's massive frame would be supported by a tall stool while he directed the orchestra with slight gestures of his hands and also with his eyes.

We may wonder how he overcame these difficulties - most others would surely have given up hope. Not so for Klemperer. Even after he suffered serious third degree burns in 1958 he was back, making records and giving concerts.

Like Sir Thomas Beecham, he disliked repeating a few bars here and there during recording sessions. Klemperer preferred to play the whole movement through again. When the technique of creating the final master by 'piecing together' sections from various takes was explained to him, he felt it was dishonest and enquired angrily "You mean the performance is not by me?".

His recordings were when released, and remain so today, landmarks in the history of the gramophone. I looked through some copies of The Gramophone from the 1950s in search of a reviewer's comments on his art as recorded at that time. The first review of a Klemperer/ Philharmonia disc which came to hand referred to a Columbia issue



of Beethoven's Eroica symphony, released in 1956. Trevor Harvey recommended this version against the others available at that time. Praise indeed when one considers that the competition included such luminaries as Furtwangler, Karajan, Klieber and Walter.

Yes, high but well-earned praise for this great figure whose career in the recording studios spaned almost half a century, from the 1920s until his death at the age of 88. He had a long and productive life and thanks to the legacy of recordings (some as conductor of his own compositions) his position in musical history will always be secure: Dr. Otto Klemperer, one of the finest interpreters of music alive during this century.

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### THOSE CURIOUS NUMBERS

Sheffield, March 5 1965

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

Obviously Paul Collenette (page 149) didn't ask the right 'Eminent Expert'. The answer to his problem is quite simple. Up to 1929 HMV gave a 'single face number' to every recording. The pattern is quite well known and keys have been published in both the Record Collector and Talking Machine Review. In the example given, orchestral records were numbered from 500 to 999, after which came 2-500 to 2-999 etc. The 8-680 is simply 'eighth time round' orchestral record no. 680.

The system became very complicated - 27 types of record, 10 language areas, two companies (HMV and Zonophone) and three price categories meant that a record had to be given its correct number from one of about 1620 blocks. In 1929 a new system was begun. This time all London 10-inch recordings were given face numbers in a series which started at 30-600 and ran consecutively irrespective of what was on the disc until 1934, by which time well over 12000 records had been listed. 12-inch records were numbered from 32-600 to 32-4849 in the same way.

When Victor masters were used, face numbers were allocated in the series 40-600 and 42-600 and other branches (French, Italian etc.) used similar series running as far as 130-600 and 132-600 for Australian material.

Yours sincerely, Alan Kelly

*Frank Andrews adds the following chart of most of the number blocks in the 1929 system, and comments:*

The system of giving each disc one catalogue (coupling) number, two single catalogue numbers and the two matrix numbers was rapidly dispensed with around September/October 1935 and records began to be issued simply with the coupling number as the only catalogue number and the matrix number for each side, and it was from the catalogued matrix numbers that recordings would be drawn to make up differently coupled sides for use



in the various catalogues in different parts of the world. New recordings were no longer catalogued with a different number for each side. Incidentally, when the Gramophone Co. and its associated companies produced their first double-sided discs in Europe and Russia, they were not given a coupling number. There were thus two numbers for each disc for dealers and public, and a record could be ordered by either of the numbers.

30-600	10in.	32-600	12in.	London Branch
37-600	7in.			Private and tests
40-600	10in.	42-600	12in.	Recordings from Victor
47-600	7in			Recordings from Victor
50-600	10in.	52-600	12in.	Paris branch
60-600	10in.	62-600	12in.	Berlin branch
70-000	10in.	72-600	12in.	Prague branch
80-2000	10in.			Calcutta branch
88-600	8in.			Calcutta branch
90-1000	10in.			Calcutta, from Victor recordings
100-600	10in.	102-600	12in.	Milan
110-600	10in.	112-600	12in.	Barcelona
120-600	10in.	122-600	12in.	Australia
130-600	10in.	132-600	12in.	Australia from Victor
140-600	10in.	142-600	12in.	Athens
150-600	10in.	151-000	10in.	Athens
152-600	12in.			Athens
160-600	10in.			Vienna.

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## HELP WANTED

RICHARD BURGER/CARL WILHELMI

These are the real and assumed names of the father of Mr. Charles Burger, of [redacted] Australia. Mr. Burger is very anxious to find at least some of the recordings made by his father on Pathe wax cylinders. He remembers some of these cylinders being at home when he was a boy, but has lost track of them now. Richard Burger was Austrian, and sang an extensive operatic repertoire in German, both under his real name and his stage name. He died in 1936. Can anyone help Mr. Burger?

ELSIE CARLISLE

Nearer home, Mr. R.A.Hickman, of [redacted] is trying to find a list of the recorded output of Elsie Carlisle. He has found recordings by her on the following makes:  
Sterno, Dominion, 4-in-1, Imperial, Rex, Decca and HMV, and he has found 63 records.

Anyone who would like to exchange information on this artiste is asked to contact Mr. Hickman.



# OBITUARY

## LESLIE SARONY

The discography of Leslie Sarony, who died on February 12th, reads like a history of recording since the advent of the electrical system. From his first record as vocalist with Teddy Brown and his Band in *Susie was a Real Wild Child* on Imperial 1529 on May 18 1926, until after the outbreak of war in 1939, he was a regular visitor to every major studio. Sarony's recordings occupy fourteen pages in Brian Rust's 'British Music Hall on Record' (available from the Hillandale Booklist) and the labels - as well as Imperial - must be a record (no pun intended): HMV, Edison Bell Electron, Parlophone, Victory, Columbia, Decca, Edison Bell Radio, Eclipse, Broadcast, Zonophone, Rex and Regal Zonophone.

Sarony - whose real name was Fry - was 87 when he died in Saint George's Hospital at Tooting in South West London - and his death marked the end of a 75-year career which started on the stage and extended to wireless, gramophone records, film and finally television. For many years Sarony appeared with his partner Leslie Holmes and The Two Leslies are still remembered with affection by an older generation of BBC listeners. But such was his durability and versatility that as recently as 1983 he appeared in the Royal Variety Show doing a peg-leg performance, and only recently was seen in Roy Hudd's television series on variety theatre.

Surprisingly though, for one who spent a lifetime treading the boards, Sarony never intended to go on the stage. Instead he wanted to be a drummer in the Guards and although his ambition was unrealised, he did write the march, often played by the Guards bands, entitled *When the Guards are on Parade*. He also wrote 150 or 400 songs (depending on whether you believe the Daily Telegraph or the Guardian obituary). But whatever the correct number, Sarony will for ever be remembered by gramophone record collectors everywhere for his silly-song titles (se George Frow, 'People, Paper and Things', Hillandale No. 123, December 1981). These titles include *I Lift up my Finger and say 'Tweet Tweet'*, *I Like Riding on a Choo Choo*, *Don't do that to the Poor Puss Cat* and *Bunky Doodle I Doh*. (They don't write 'em like that any more!) Confusion reigns in the learned columns of one of our 'heavier' newspapers over the claim that Sarony wrote *The Dicky Bird Hop*, but there is no doubt that he was the author of *Ain't it Great to be Blooming Well Dead*, which had the dubious distinction in 1932 of being one of the first gramophone records banned by the BBC. It is on Imperial 2688 and judging by the number of copies which still turn up, the ban must have had a beneficial effect on sales.

I was pleased to be asked by the Editor to pen this tribute because Leslie Sarony was one of a select few with whom I grew up. He and Albert Sandler, Henry Hall, Jack Hylton and Primo Scala were the artistes on a pile of well-worn 78s which accompanied the Columbia Cadet portable of which I wrote in this journal in 1981. Sarony's *The Alpine Milkman* and *Shut the Gate* on Imperial 2332 have been steeled almost into oblivion but still they bring back memories of thirty years ago. (If anybody has a spare, clean copy, I would be pleased to hear!) Incidentally, another in the same pile was Jack Hylton's *Rhymes* on Decca with Sarony singing his own lyrics. That disc also has survived, but I have since found a clean copy, as well as the Zonophone version.

Colin Johnson

The Alpine Milkman was one of my favourites thirty years ago, too, but Bobbie Comber's version on Broadcast. - Ed.





# Perfect Reflection



EDISON BELL

## VELVET FACE

12 Inch VIOLET LABEL 5/6 each.

Violet  
Label  
3/6  
10-inch  
Double  
- Sided

- 502 { Overture—Marriage of Figaro *Mozart*  
Overture—Magic Flute *Mozart*  
**BRITISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.**  
(Conductor: The Late Raymond Rose).
- 503 { Overture—Fingal's Cave *Mendelssohn*  
Tone Poem—Finlandia *Sibelius*  
**ROYAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.**
- 511 { Omaha (Waltz) *Stoddon & Nicholls*  
Sybil (Waltz) *Jacobi*
- 510 { The Love Nest (Fox Trot) *Hirsch*  
Whispering (Fox Trot) *Schönberger*  
**CORELLI WINDEATT'S ORCHESTRA.**
- 504 { March of the Dwarfs *Grieg*  
Tantalusquale Overture *Sibbc*  
**BAND OF H.M. 1st LIFE GUARDS.**
- 501 { Samson and Delilah, Sel. 1 *Saint-Saëns*  
Samson and Delilah, Sel. 2 *Saint-Saëns*  
**PHILIP LEWIS' PALLADIUM OCTETTE.**

- 509 { Imagination *Zacharewitsch*  
Ave Maria *Schubert*  
**MICHAEL ZACHAREWITSCH (Violin)**
- 505 { Angels Guard Thee *Godard*  
Angels' Serenade *Brug*  
**MADAME JEANNE BROLA (Soprano)**  
with Violin Obligato.
- 506 { O Divine Redeemer *Gounod*  
O Rest in the Lord—Elijah *Mendelssohn*  
**Miss JESSIE BROUGHTON (Coprato).**
- 500 { Rise of the Morning *Wood*  
Galway by the Sea *Burclay*  
**IVOR FOSTER (Baritone).**
- 507 { The Powder Monkey *Watson*  
The Boy's Lament *Squire*  
**ROBERT HOWE (Bass Baritone).**
- 508 { Contrades in Arms *Adam*  
Now the Dice Invite our Leisure *Verdi*  
Il Trovatore *Verdi*  
**THE CYMRIC QUARTETTE (Vocal).**

Violet  
Label  
5/6  
12-inch  
Double  
- Sided

Above are given the titles of the 12-inch records included in the first issue of the Velvet Face Series; these, together with the titles of 18 double-sided 10-inch discs (3/6 each), will be found in the New Art Catalogue of Edison Bell Velvet Face Records. Apply to your dealer for a free copy. VF Records are

SOLD BY THE LEADING DEALERS.

# VF

Sole Manufacturers and  
Patentees:  
**J. E. HOUGH, Ltd.,**  
Edison Bell Works,  
LONDON, S.E.

**SURFACE SMOOTH  
AS VELVET.**  
FREE FROM . . .  
FOREIGN NOISE.

# RECORDS



# GENUINE Edison Bell Records.

PART 3

by Frank Andrews

## EDISON BELL VELVET FACE RECORDS (SECOND SERIES)

The new V.F.s were given violet and gold labels, the 10-inch discs selling at 3s.6d. and the 12-inch at 5s.6d. The former Velvet Face catalogue had ceased by this time, but, confusingly, the new 10-inch series had again been given a 1,000 catalogue number block. The matrix numbers were the same series as were in current use for the Winners. The 12-inch records were catalogued in the 500s, but when this reached 600 the former 12-inch series was also duplicated. It was intended that the talent and repertoire of these new Velvet Faces would be of a higher quality than that employed in the earlier series, although a few titles from the former catalogue were re-pressed and given new numbers. A dozen or so 12-inch and twenty 10-inch comprised the first issues listed in an art catalogue.

On page 156 of Joe Batten's Book the author has this to say on the new Velvet Faces: "I was engaged by the Edison Bell Company. Until 1920 they had been one of the foremost manufacturers of popular records ..... Now came a change of policy: it was decided to compete with the two 'big fellows', as HMV and Columbia were known, with a new venture called Velvet Face. To me was assigned the onus of building a catalogue of good music. I was in for a fight, one after my own heart, and I was soon giving and receiving some hard knocks. ... Whenever I began negotiations with a well-known conductor, singer or instrumentalist, it would at once become known to the other companies, and Fred Gaisberg for HMV or either Arthur Brooks or Ray Langley for Columbia would be on their doorsteps with better a offer. ... Nevertheless my catalogue became thick with a list of artistes and a selection of titles which began to be my pride."

Joe Batten then goes on to list the more important of his achievements between the years 1920 and 1927.

Edison Bell had always referred to its products as 'British Throughout' and continued to do so in spite of the fact that in January 1922 some releases of the Winners had been pressed from imported American 'mothers' made by the Starr Piano Company of Richmond, Virginia, the makers of Gennett records. A reciprocal agreement for the exchange of 'mothers' appears to have been concluded for the Gennetts in America also began to use J.E.Hough Ltd. recorded matrices. Some Velvet Faces also began to use Gennett material, generally of dance bands which were often issued here under pseudonyms.

During 1922 'The Winner' label became 'Winner', with gold printing on a claret label. The single horse and jockey remained, an un-framed line drawing in the upper half of the label with 'British Throughout' to the right.

## THE BELL DISC

Priced at 1s.3d. the small Bell records (just under 5½ inches in diameter) were introduced in November 1921. The labels were lilac and blue, and the repertoire designed to



suit young and old alike. Competitors also engaged themselves in the small record market to provide entertainment for those on low incomes. In terms of playing time and quality such discs were much more expensive than the 1s. and 1s.1d. 10-inch records of 1913 which ceased during the war. Yet the small discs had arrived and, from various manufacturers, were to survive for fifteen years, being gradually increased in size and reduced in price until the 6d. Crown records of the Crystallite business in the 1930s.

The Bells' matrices, like the larger Edison Bell matrices, were used for contract work and the 200 matrix series were to be found on such records as The Dinky, The Fairy, The Little Briton, Marspen and Savana. The matrices were also used to press special labels of the 'one-off' type for special customers and also for overseas customers.

In September 1923 a new price structure was introduced for Velvet Face. The violet and gold labelled discs were reduced to 3s. and 4s.6d., and new green and gold labels were introduced at 3s.6d. and 5s.6d. Some of the former violet labels were upgraded to the new green series.

From October 1923, the occasional Winner record was pressed from American 'mothers' from masters used for Paramount and Puritan records in the U.S.A. These were still labelled 'British Throughout'.

Further extensions to the London factory were in hand in September 1923, but more floor space was required and in February 1924, J.E.Hough Ltd. acquired the Huntingdon factory from English Clocks and Gramophones Ltd, then in the process of liquidation. When suitably equipped, this new Edison Bell factory was expected to give employment to 300 workers. The London factories, at the height of the season, employed about 700 people.

Eighteen months after their introduction the Bells were reduced to 1s., in May 1924. By this time, the Winner label had been slightly modified in that the 'British Patent 1912' had been put to the right-hand side.

In June 1924 the company borrowed £40,000 with the whole of the leasehold and freehold properties as security and subject of a Trust Deed and Land Registry charge, also all the assets of the company, its uncalled capital and two endowment policies of £2,000 each. The company then had eleven different properties in Camberwell and Peckham and two in Huntingdon.

A later change to the Winner label during 1924 was the substitution of scarlet for claret and the name style, horse and jockey were given a brown or black shadow. A variation to this label appeared in 1925 when the words 'guaranteed' and 'British' were removed and an encircled 'British Patent 1912' was placed to the left-hand side. The Velvet Face had also had a change in its label, the name now appearing as 'Velvet VF Face Edison Bell'.

At the close of 1924 a New Year's Message had been recorded by James Hough, which was not issued to dealers until early in March 1925. Sadly, on February 24th, Hough had a fall while out walking and after an operation he became gravely ill and died the next Sunday, aged 76. Many of the obituaries referred to him as 'The Father of the Trade'.

For the 1925-6 season the Velvet Face and Winner catalogues were combined as one. The Huntingdon factories had been equipped with modern automatic machinery and the



London works re-equipped likewise. This provision for increased and quicker production enabled the company to reduce the price of both sizes of Velvet Face. The green and violet 10-inch went down to 2s.6d. and the 12-inch in both colours were reduced to 4s., and from then on were to be printed with green and gold labels only. Winners remained at 2s.6d. The combined catalogue contained over 3,000 titles, and all future monthly supplements would cover both labels. The Winner label by now had a 1925 legend added to its design.

The Cranbourne Street premises had been closed when the lease expired, but new showrooms had been opened in August at Bangalore House, Newton St., High Holborn. An artists' rehearsal room and an office for Joe Batten, the Musical Director, were also there. All alterations at the Huntingdon factory were reported completed in October 1925, where Mr. Arthur Hough had been appointed the Works Manager.

Electrical recording by the Western Electric system was then already in use by the rival Columbia and Gramophone companies, and although it was to be some little time before the Edison Bell works had developed its own electrical system, the company calimed to have recorded 4,851 voices on a Winner of 'Mr. & Mrs. Brown at a Football Match'. This was issued in November 1925 (4295).

A second patent was granted in 1925, and this was duly included in the label design. The first electrical recordings from J.E.Hough Ltd. were from imported American 'mothers' and one of the earliest issues was of Milton Charles at the organ of Chicago's Tivoli Theatre. This came via Paramount Records, but was actually recorded by the Marsh Laboratories for their Autograph Record label, a company which is reputed to have issued the first electrical recordings in the U.S.A. The U.K. issue was Winner 4386, released in March 1926.

It was about March 1926 that the Winers were given an entirely new design of label under the new style of 'Edison Bell Winner Record'. This was nother scarlet and gold label, but the horse and jockey disappeared and was substituted by the long established picture of a Bell as the dominant feature, with the three extant patent numbers around the spindle hole. Another new feature was the inclusion of the proprietor's name and the Huntingdon address added round the lower edge of the label. The Velvet Faces were also given a new name. They became 'Edison Bell VF Records' and also bore the three patent numbers and addresses of the proprietor.

#### EDISON BELL LTD.

The fifth company

The four companies which had controlled the Edison Bell business for the previous thirty-three years or so had all been private limited liability companies. In May 1926 a fifth company took control of Edison Bell. This was Edison Bell Limited, which was simply J.E.Hough Ltd. floated as a public company offering 160,000 7½% cumulative preference shares and 150,000 ordinary shares of £1 each. The directorship remained the same. The £40,000 loan of 1924 was repaid. The business was doing well and had sold an extra one million records during the previous year's trading.

With a new company in control for the Edison Bell business, it became necessary to alter all the labels then in manufacture. This was done by December 1926. By then all discs emanating from the works were being recorded by an electrical process. The Talking Machine News announced this as a fact as early as September. The system employed was that invented by P.G.A.H.Voigt, who had joined the radio division at the Edison Bell works in November 1922. The first commercial issue of the new system was Winner 4444 'The Pearl of Malabar', released in July 1926. In later years, Voigt revealed that





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he always called his first cutting head his 'Malabar' cutter as a result.

In the spring of 1926, the small Bell records were increased in size to 6 inches, and the price was cut to 6d. The later issues were also electrically recorded. Contract work for Curry's had been regained in the early 1920s. Curry & Sons and Curry's Cycle Stores were amalgamated in 1922 as Curry's Limited. The latter used both the Invicta Record Co. Ltd. and Crystalate for the pressing of records as well as using Edison Bell material for its Westport and Portland labels. Many of these were simply Winner records with overstock labels. In 1927, when Curry's reformed as Curry's (1927) Limited, the Portland label was continued using Edison Bell matrices. Some Hibernia and Henecy Irish discs were also made from Edison Bell masters.

With electrical recording an established fact, many old titles in the catalogue which had retained their popularity were re-recorded, often using the same catalogue number although different artists had to be employed in many instances. Some titles were re-recorded for a second time. The first 'outside' electrical recording took place in November 1926, on Armistice Day, when ex-servicemen sang community songs in the Playhouse Cinema, Lewisham. These were issued on Winner 4554.

New West End showrooms were opened on a corner site in fashionable Regent Street in January 1927. For a time one could see a record press at work through the window and the historical recordings made by Gladstone, Sullivan and Florence Nightingale for the early Edison Phonograph Company, in London, were also on display for a short season.

#### ELECTRON RECORDS

Both sizes of Velvet Face records ceased with the June issues of 1927. There had been just over 200 couplings during the previous 6½ years. It appears that Edison Bell had not made use of any Gennett masters for over a year, but other American matrices as used on that country's Banner, Paramount, Puritan and Regal labels had been employed.

In July 1927 10-inch and 12-inch Edison Bell Electrons were issued for the first time, with steel blue and gold labels. They were priced at 3s.6d. and 4s.6d. and were thus more expensive than the old Velvet Faces. The first issues appear to have had the word 'Electron' omitted from the underlining of 'Edison Bell' as printed on the labels. The Electrons, of course, were the first Edison Bell records to be wholly electrically recorded from the first issues. The 1912 patent had expired and was never mentioned on the Electron labels. The 10-inch records were catalogued from 0150 upwards, with the matrices within the Winner series, and the 12-inch numbers started at X.501 and continued the matrix series used for the defunct Velvet Faces. By the close of the year 'Electron' was being printed in the flash under 'Edison Bell' and a 1927 patent appeared on the company's labels in addition to that of 1925.

A serious competitor to all makes of 10-inch records of popular repertoire was the 8-inch Broadcast, launched in July 1927 by Vocalion. These were also sold through the Co-operative Wholesale Society as 'Unison'. The Broadcast sold for 1s.3d. and had a playing time equal to that of a conventional 10-inch disc.

During 1927 Joe Batten, Edison Bell's musical director, departed and took up a similar position with Columbia. His position was filled by George Ison, a pianist and ex-musical director for other companies before returning to Edison Bell, which he had left in 1907. Harry Hudson, another pianist, a singer and orchestral conductor was appointed the recording manager.



### THE CROWN RECORD

The 6-inch Bells were discontinued in September 1927. They were replaced in October by the Crown Record. This was also 6 inches, but priced at 9d. It was given a 900 catalogue series (the last of the Bells had been in a 700 series, having jumped from 399. They had started at 250). The Crowns were given scarlet labels with gold printing, except for those intended for use with the Picturegram machine, which were in blue and gold. (The Picturegram displayed a moving roll of 24 pictures to accompany the records. This invention was launched in January 1928. The recordings were made by Harry Hemsley as storyteller).

### BELTONA

When Vocalion abandoned 10 and 12-inch record manufacture in June 1927, a few companies were left without their supplies of contract discs. One of these was John G. Murdoch, which had been supplied with Beltona records by Vocalion since 1922. Now Edison Bell was contracted, and the first Beltonas with with Edison Bell recorded matrices appeared in the Beltona list for December 1927. This contract was a little different from those hitherto made for clients in Britain in that special recordings were undertaken, as well as the employment of matrices in use for Winner and Electron records.

### RADIO RECORDS

Edison Bell's response to the Broadcast record, which was proving a very successful product, was its own 8-inch disc. This was at first styled 'Radio' but later 'Edison Bell Radio'. The labels were dark blue with gold printing. The catalogue series began with an 800 range but jumped from 999 to 1200, possibly to avoid confusion with the former Velvet Face records. Six months later Winners were reduced to 2s.0d. and the small Crowns were discontinued, having had forty issues in twelve months. The Radios were then being handled by fifty-one factors and were proving successful.

### EDISON BELL INTERNATIONAL LTD.

The Edison Bell continental and overseas business which had been increasing since the end of the war had reached a stage where it was found necessary to float another company to handle the business. Accordingly, in October 1928 Edison Bell International Ltd. was founded upon the overseas business, including a Yugoslavian branch at Penkala, whose Managing Director Mr. Goodman was elected to the International Board. He joined some of Edison Bell's directors and Ralph Hawkes of the music publishers, Hawkes & Son (London) Ltd. Capitalised at £300,000, the new company took over all the foreign rights of Edison Bell, except for the North American continent. The 225,000 shares on offer to the public were oversubscribed.

One of the International company's first recording ventures took place in London when titles were made for Holland and the Dutch East Indies by the Krotjong Orchest Eurasi. Holland is known to have had an 'Edison Bell' record with a 6,000 catalogue series and a Winner in a 100 series. During 1928, Voigt recorded over 200 titles in Budapest. (about a year earlier, he had been recording in Zagreb).

At a later date, Edison Bell was to take over the Decca Record Company's French business, and this was renamed Edison Bell (France) S.A. During the next five years various records were to circulate overseas, made from Edison Bell matrices in the 8, 10 and some 6 inch sizes, bearing labels with such names as Doremi, Frany, Puck, Daliacord, Epa Cord, Teco-Lyra, Cameo, Disclair, Astra, Imperial, Olympia, Sondor, Super Record and Triumph.



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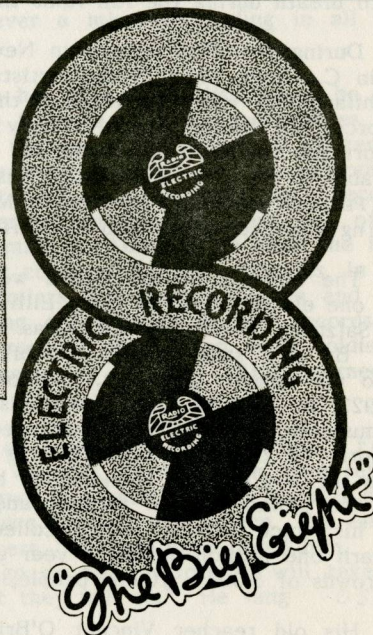
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811	Light of Foot National Emblem.	810	Persian Rosebud One Summer Night
813	Overture "William Tell" Parts 1 and 2.	IVOR EVANS Waltz Songs	
MORLAIS MORGAN Baritone.		Charmaine Sunset down in Somerset	
828	"Indian Love Lyrics" No. 1. Temple Bells No. 2. Less than the Dust.	815	CHRIS. HALL Vocal Stewdie-o-dle-o-o She Don't Wanna
829	"Indian Love Lyrics." No. 3. Kashmiri Songs No. 4. Till I Wake	819	Gonna Get a Girl The Song is Ended
PEERLESS ORCHESTRA Waltzes		HARRY HUDSON'S MELODY MEN	
803	C'est Vous (It's You) Diane	801	Persian Rosebud Oriental Fox Trot Leonora Fox Trot
J. PAQUES Novelty Piano Solos		802	Hallelujah Fox Trot Dancing Tambourine Fox Trot
804	Flapperette Hot Piano	806	You're My Happy Ending Fox Trot Russian Lullaby Waltz
STANLEY KIRKBY Waltz Songs		807	The Yale Blues Blues The Birth of the Blues Fox Trot Blues
826	Janette Are You Lonesome To-night?	822	Clonk-er-ty-clonk Descriptive Patrol with Vocal Chorus Did you mean it? Fox Trot with Vocal Chorus
KEITH JAMES Songs		805	In a Street of Chinese Lanterns Fox Trot with Vocal Chorus A Red-Roofed Chalet Fox Trot
809	Tired Hands If your face wants to laugh	820	Polly Novelty Piano Fox Trots Dainty Miss with Orchestra
WAG ABBEY Xylophone with Orchestra		TOM RARRATT (Comedy Songs)	
821	Snatches Jazz Fountain	816	Where, Oh Where Do I Live Ma, Look at Charlie



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# John McCormack

by Peter Martland

Part 2

From 1907 to the first Great War John appeared at every season in Covent Garden. In 1909 he made his debut in New York at the Manhattan Opera House for Oscar Hammerstein, and between 1910 and 1918 he sang in five seasons at the Metropolitan. He made his Italian debut with his friend Mario Sammarco in San Carlo in *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*. He was in great demand, once appearing on the same programme as the great Adelina Patti. He so admired her singing that he bought all her records and recorded one of her songs, *Pur Dicesti*, commenting "That'll teach the sopranos".

Without doubt the role McCormack received greatest critical acclaim for was that of Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. It is the acknowledged interpretation of the part. After singing *Il Mio Tesoro* on one occasion the conductor Felix Weingartner laid down his baton and led the applause. Kubelik remarked "You must have a Stradivarius in your throat" and George Bernard Shaw said he had never heard finer singing. John's recording of 'My Treasure' is the one he always said he would stake his reputation on. It is a tenor's graveyard; not only are there sixty-four ascending notes in about 17 seconds, but to breath during the run ruins the effect.

During the 1910 season in New York John's career in records took a decisive turn. Calvin C. Child, head of the Artists' Department at Victor, heard John at a performance in Philadelphia which resulted in the offer of a contract. The Odeon contract was still in force, but Victor agreed to pay Odeon £2,000 to release the singer from this. John McCormack remained a victor/HMV artist until he died. An early example of the art he was able to transfer on to Victor discs is *Ah, Moon of my Delight* from Lisa Lehman's *In a Persian Garden*, recorded on March 16th 1911. John's ability to 'float off' the growing sophistication and the unique nature of his singing voice.

The honours of the Opera were all achieved by McCormack in the years to 1914. Yet, one eluded him. In 1914, Lilli Lehmann asked him to sing the role of Don Ottavio in the Salzburg Festival. John was travelling to fulfill that engagement when war broke out. By this stage in his career, John was moving increasingly away from opera and on to the concert platform. Although he made his last appearance on the operatic stage in 1923, he had, by 1914, found his true metier in concert. John's great talent was as a communicator and he felt frustrated with the artificiality of the opera. On the concert platform he could be himself, sing the songs he wanted to in congenial keys. In these years the McCormack phenomenon hit America. The accepted form of popular music was still the ballad and on records and in the concert hall John poured out the gold that was his voice and in return collected vast sums of tribute. In these years he began to earn one million dollars a year and to sing between sixty and ninety concerts a season to crowds of 5,000 - 10,000 people, as well as maintain his operatic contacts.

His old teacher Vincent O'Brien was accompanist; on one early tour he wrote "...



on their American tour when they had to do a concert in Kansas in an immense hall with a capacity of 10,000 McCormack said: 'I will sing in the concert hall just the same as I sang in the room in which you first heard me. If Kreisler came into the hall he would not look at the size of it. He would play the violin and it would be heard', and it was, even by that huge audience." McCormack's voice and Kreisler's violin blended perfectly together and they made many happy records. Another friend was the composer Rachmaninoff, although they never recorded together.

A ballad associated with John throughout his long career is *I Hear you Calling Me*. The composer was Charles Marshall. John's account of how he came to hear it for the first time is interesting, and is recounted by L.A.G.Strong: "Charles Marshall asked is he could show him some of his own songs. having played through a number of these McCormack asked 'Have you any other songs?' 'I have one' Marshall answered, 'but no-one will touch it'. He pulled the much-handled manuscript from his pocket and started to play. John hummed it through softly. When he came to the last verse he sang the opening phrase *mezzo voce* rising to the high A natural with wonderful beauty of tone. He admired the note himself, but was not at all prepared for its effect on the composer. 'Gook Lord!' shouted Marshall, 'That is the exact sound I want on that note. Come on John, sing it again.' And John sang again, 'I Hear You Calling Me'".

For over 27 years John's accompanist on the platform was Edwin 'Teddy' Schneider. He was a quiet self-effacing man, a true and rounded musician, a perfect partner to the ebullient yet highly strung tenor. Lily McCormack recalls "In concert work he lost himself in each song as he sang it. In a letter to me after one concert, Teddy Schneider wrote: 'John dramatised every song he sang .... he painted the picture vocally .... words meant something to him, and the vocal line was oftimes a secondary thing. His Irish folk songs were of the earth, and I grew to love them as my very own'". Elsewhere she refers to the obvious perfect musical understanding that existed between Schneider and McCormack, between whom, she says, there was never a misunderstanding in all those 27 years.

With John's career in America assured and with his Irish nationalist views, he found himself increasingly at odds with current thinking in England, and his appearances there became less frequent. With financial success, he took out papers for American citizenship, a fact which became known in Britain in 1917. He was criticised for his opinions, his alleged lack of commitment to Britain's war effort and most seriously for becoming an American. Things became no easier when America entered the war. He offered his services to President Wilson, who urged him to remain in America 'to keep the fountains of sentiment flowing'. He toured America giving concerts for war charities, in particular for the Red Cross. He raised millions of dollars for these charities and many more in his pushing of Liberty Bonds. His recording career took in war records, and it was of some comfort to him to realise that his records cheered up many soldiers of all nationalities in the trenches. One record, *The Trumpeter* (Victor, 1915), earned him in royalties about £40,000 a year for many years.

After the war John McCormack egged to go on tour again to Australia. Feeling against him and Ireland was so great that the tour was cut short. When John returned to London in 1924 it was as a more mature artist and as a wiser man. He was clearly uncertain of his reception - it had been ten years since his last appearance. He engaged the small Queen's Hall as the venue of his first concert. Friends encouraged him. Clara Butt said "If they talk of making a fuss when you go on the platform, I will take your hand and walk on it with you. Then we will see what they will do." He sang *O Sleep*



as his first aria and the applause confirmed all was forgiven. John McCormack was back with his most loyal and enduring audience.

In the 1920s and 1930s McCormack's concerts showed not that he was given to singing 'trash' but rather he developed a balanced musical programme. He would begin, as Gerald Moore recalled, with pieces by Handel, Bach, Mozart or *Aria Antiqua*, and the second portion would include some Rachmaninoff, Schubert and Beethoven, Hugo Wolff or Brahms, finishing with something of Cesar Franck. The third part would include English and other art songs, Mendelssohn, Elgar, Quilter and the like and finally popular songs, the simple songs of Ireland that he loved and that many ordinary people had come to hear. The result was, as Desmond Shawe Taylor wrote in the 1980 edition of Grove "....it alienated many musical people as much as it pleased the wider public." Ernest Newman expressed this in magisterial terms in 1945. He wrote ".....few realised how great an artist he was and why. To the multitude he was the unrivalled singer of simple things expressed in a simple musical way, with a special gift for clear enunciation and difficult melodic line drawing. But these gifts, admirable as they are in themselves and in his use of them, were only as part of a much larger whole. He was so perfect in small things because he was steeped in greater ones, was subtly intimate with them and had attained complete mastery of them...." Of all John's records, few are as perfect as *Care Salve* from Handel's *Atlanta*. Nothing sums up Newman's words as well as the recording made by HMV in September 1924, in the English translation *My Beloved*.

With his great wealth and personality, John was able to get to know and to move in the circles of the rich and the famous, sportsmen, politicians, artists and musicians. In earlier days it had been Caruso, but he had died in 1921. When someone suggested that John was the greatest tenor in the world, he retorted "The greatest tenor in the world is dead, the next one has not come along yet."

His wealth enabled him to indulge in a lifestyle that accorded with his station in life as a super-star. He owned at one time or another twelve Rolls-Royces, never drank anything but champagne, owned the best collection of Augustus John's paintings in private hands, and also a Gainsborough, a Rembrandt and a Frans Hals. In addition there was the Rodin statue of Romeo and Juliet, the Stradivarius violin and the string of racehorses that never achieved his ambition of winning the Derby. Sir John Lavery and Sir William Orpen painted pictures of him and his family.

With his career moving increasingly back into Europe and the British Isles, McCormack took an estate in Ireland at Moore Abbey and lived the life of a country gentleman. Those years in the 1920s and 1930s were without doubt the happiest of the tenor's life.

(To be concluded)

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#### THE W.S.GILBERT SOCIETY

The newly-formed W.S.Gilbert Society has been brought to our notice by one of its founders, Michael Walters. The Society hopes to further the knowledge, study and appreciation of Gilbert's life and writing, and re-publish any of his works out of print. The first issue of a regular journal is being prepared for this Spring. The subscription is £7 (U.K) and £10 (seamail) or £20 (airmail) overseas. All enquiries to the Society, [REDACTED]



Norwich, January 12th

Dear Christopher,

Just a few lines brought up by the 1984 Phonofair at Cotton. As Mike Field said in his write-up, I arranged it on my own, as there is no Norfolk branch of our Society.

On that day I was approached by several people asking if I could start an East Anglian branch. So now, if any members care to write to me stating that they would be interested in attending monthly get-togethers, I am willing to start an East Anglian branch.

I would like to say in reply to Barry Williamson's letter in No. 140 (October 1984) that if other members or branches get a chance to put on the annual Phonofair they would not be 'stereotyped'. The Cotton Phonofair was far from 'silent displays of acoustic machines and the like'. Music was played most of the day. All the acoustic machines were played at one period, and much music was played on a 1939 HMV record-player through a 1939 Marconi radio. Members remarked on the clarity of this set-up - and I was asked if it was for sale!

I know our magazine does flag at times. But I have written many articles for various magazines where you get paid for doing it. There is no taste in nothing! I wonder if a member submits an article and you publish it, why can't he get a small reward - say a pick of the Booklist in a certain price range. You might be surprised at the rise in quality of articles.

Kindest Regards, John Stannard

Colchester, March 23rd

Dear Mr. Editor,

Wednesday last, Mike Brown from Ipswich and myself met here for a natter and machine trial.

Unfortunately I was unable to get any more members together, but the two of us packed enough into two hours. Battle commenced with my 101 with 5a, yes, 5a soundbox and almost flat diaphragm made from meat-pie dish foil with Bettini type of transmitter with four rods of different length. Comments favourable!

Then Mike's 101 versus my 102. 102 won on points but some members are pre-conditioned by what they read! The Columbia and HMV 109 had a close run, with the HMV using an E.M.G. soundbox.

Then my little demo of (fingers in ears) electrical recording. None of your laser disc, but a piece of green lino on a 1948 2300H lathe. Reproduction using a blunt needle, yes I've got a few Durium records, was of fair quality bearing in mind the colour of the lino.

It was a shame more did not turn up to hear a white label Zonophone of a Monty Python tune in Italian, don't ask us East Saxons to translate, but the Columbia gave a good show. I nearly forgot, I ran Model 9 soundboxes with silicone rubber and cycle rubber gaskets and found a slight difference, over to you Mr. Goddall. (Cont..)



Next time Mike and I meet I hope to have a few more folk together and my party trick may be hot-stylus recording on a wax cylinder. My work in this direction is held up by lack of a shaving machine, but hard wood transmitter and tool steel stylus lapped with insulated resistance wire will be a starting point. High temperature Araldite works wonders.

I would be pleased to meet any members from Ipswich to Norwich with a view to a regular branch down here.

Also, if I may have a free plug in the magazine, I am involved in audio-visual work and am a radio amateur and would be prepared to help members with valves, transformers etc. and assist in building filters, click limiters.

I am not after any payment, but find less and less outlets are prepared to fix valve amplifiers and have several boxes of the dam things, ex 16mm. talking pictures.

Mrs. Kruesi's birthday and I've forgotten the card....

Cheers, John R Gomes

#### COLUMBIA PRE-FIXES

*Frank Andrews offers the following comments in response to Peter Adamson's question in the last issue about Columbia Light Blue and Dark Blue prefixes:*

In March 1930 in the Light Blue labelled series, records LBX1 to LBX3 were advertised, as were DBX 1&2, and DBX 7-15 in the 12-inch dark blue series. None of the 10-inch dark blue records took a DBB prefix, they were all simply DB prefixed numbers. However, two 12-inch Regals were issued with MRX2 and MRX3. (MRX1 had trouble with its matrices, and was not issued until later, when it was simply MX1). There were no issues of 10-inch light-blue Columbias, so that the possibility of any LBE numbers never arose, but there was a purple labelled issue in the 10-inch size, but that too appeared simply with a PB prefix, and not as PBB. The DBX, LBX and MRX system lasted only two or three weeks, for by the time the mid-March supplement was issued, the prefixes had been shortened to DX, LX and MX respectively.

The matrices on YB4, nos. AXD3 and ADX4, making up the Columbia Cinema Service record, are laboratory matrices applied to the masters which were made from the transfers from masters WAX4866 to WAX 4869 originally recorded 19 April 1929, issued on 9722 and 9723.

*Well, Peter Adamson says he has seen DBB numbers on records, and Frank Andrews says there ain't no such thing. How many DBBs can members find? - Ed.*



January 24th

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

Frank HOLLAND forwarded to me a copy of John Cavanagh's letter from Hillandale 141, with its emphasis on the purely musical side of the hobby, with its attendant historical aspects. This is of course equally true of automatic musical instrument collecting, especially in the field of reproducing pianos, of which such musicians as Busoni thought extremely highly. Among the various piano systems lies a very sizeable archive of recordings by various artists; the concerts here at the Museum have often proved the possible scope for those conducting research.

It may interest Mr. Cavanagh to know that Willhelm Backhaus figures prominently among the roster of pianists who recorded on piano rolls; indeed, he would appear to be one of the most prolific, having made recordings for all the major systems. There are, in fact, over one hundred rolls listed by Backhaus, details of which follow.

Arnold Bax seems to have suffered a similar fate in his own lifetime, as far as roll recordings go, to that which is still the case now. However, I think there are particular reasons for this specific area which may be worth mention. The reproducing piano was a highly costly item in its day, which exerted a prohibitive effect on its market.

This meant that such instruments were most likely to be found in the homes of the upper and upper-middle classes, who especially in England and the United States were likely to be musically quite conservative. Thus 'contemporary' music puts in a limited appearance in most companies' roll catalogues, compared with the amount of recordings devoted to established 'traditional' composers and popular music of the time. Even Welte, the earliest and most adventurous company in this respect, feature Mahler, Debussy and Ravel; there is to my knowledge no Schoenberg or Berg, one Hindemith roll and a very little Strauss, and none of Busoni's original works. Although started much later, it might be remembered that there was no equivalent of the Society subscription system adopted by HMV, which made possible Schnabel's Beethoven recordings, together with Landowska's Scarlatti and Couperin and so on. Thus to market 'minority taste' material was a fairly high commercial risk, given the relatively small market for reproducing piano rolls anyway. Rolls made from scores for the more prolific foot-blown player piano could range further afield and often did - long before Schnabel, the thirty-two Beethoven sonatas were available as Pianola rolls!

Francis Bowdery, Helper, Musical Museum

*Space precludes the printing herewith of Francis Bowdery's list of rolls recorded by Backhaus, and of five rolls of music by Bax, but a copy will be sent to any reader on request, and on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, from the Editor.*

*Shortly before receiving Francis Bowdery's letter and list, I had a long letter from the Curator of the Musical Museum, Frank Holland, (he was in hospital at the time, and thus had time to indulge in some correspondence) containing numerous reminiscences, some of interest to me because he lived in my part of the world in his early life, but one or two tit-bits of gramophonic concern were included. Did you know, for example, that Compton Mackenzie used to let the spring of his gramophone run down - on the radio? I was reminded en passant that the Museum still needs a Stentorphone soundbox, and it seems that Frank himself would like a copy of 'Cohen on the Telephone'. It was the first record he ever heard, played on a tall thin cabinet gramophone (?Bijou Grand) in 1917.*



Berlin, March 5 1985

Dear Editor,

I recently found in a junk-shop six paper cartons each containing one 30cm. (12in.) record, produced in 1913 as benefit records in support of a day-nursery in Ahlbeck (near Hamburg). In place of a label, all the records have a half-length portrait in relief of Kaiser Willhelm II. Around the rim is engraved "In memory of the 25th Jubilee of Kaiser Willhelm 1888 - 1913". The records are single-sided, with a red Nipper label on the back, and a reference to the beneficiaries of the project. To avoid marring the portrait, there is no centre hole, and the record lies in a tin container with a hole for the spindle.

The records were unfortunately so expensive that I could only buy one of them. It is a recording of Adelaide Andrejewa (Soprano) performing an aria out of *Il Re Pastore* (not by Mozart, but by Friedrich II - Frederick the Great). It has the catalogue number 043227. In Volume 7 of *Voices of the Past* a different record is listed under this number:

Von Skilondz, L'amero, saro costante (*Il Re Pastore*/Mozart).

Does anyone know of another recording by Adelaide Andrejewa?

Altogether, nine records in this series were published, and these were listed in Klaus D.Hartel's book, 'Plattensammeln - Mein Hobby.'

Best Wishes, Dr. Peter Czada.

The relief portrait will be familiar to some members in this country from the 7-inch 'Coronation Plate' issued in 1902, with the heads of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. This also had no centre hole, and sat in a wooden tray which raised the record itself above the turntable spindle. As far as I am aware, however, it was not sold in aid of anything - apart from the Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd's trading profit, of course! - Ed.

"CUDDLE UP A LITTLE CLOSER", Conversational Duets 1906 - 1921. Stereo Cassette

Nancie Kennedy, soprano: Milford Fargo, tenor; Robert Freeman, piano

(Obtainable from Steve Ramm, [REDACTED]  
U.S.A. Cost £6 post paid, Sterling accepted.)

It is difficult to think of any of the old sentimental duets from early cylinders and discs that survive in a modern recorded form today; this cassette is a re-presentation of sixteen of them, sung as closely as possible to the original style without leaning toward impersonating the old artists.

The two singers - and accompanist - enjoy themselves greatly, bringing a freshness to the old sentiments and clarity to every word, and both are in good voice and make an attractive singing pair in themselves. I did notice that the stereo separation tends to



detract from the duet intention, and some listeners may prefer to alter this on their equipment.

All the songs have been re-created by these artists from recordings of Ada Jones and other women singers, in duet with Billy Murray and other partners. In the accompanying notes the songs are well documented and dated, and there are some paragraphs on Ada Jones - 'The first lady of the phonograph' - as one would expect from Milford Fargo, the expert on her life and career.

I much enjoyed this cassette and its original approach, and am pleased to have the opportunity of bringing it to members' notice.

Titles are as follows:

When Francis Dances with Me; Smarty; Cuddle up a Little Closer; All Alone; You Can't Give your Heart to Somebody Else; Come, Josephine in my Flying Machine; Be my Little Teddy Bear; There's a Station on my Railroad Track; Shine on, Harvest Moon; Are you from Dixie? Some Sunday Morning; She Used to be the Slowest Girl in Town; In the Heart of the City; What do you Want to Make those Eyes at me for?; Under the Yum Yum Tree; By the Beautiful Sea.

George Frow.

#### HERITAGE IN BRASS - Volume Two: JACK MACKINTOSH, "I Hear You Calling Me"

The second issue in this series was released in February and contains eighteen solo cornet recordings by Jack Mackintosh, often regarded as Britain's finest cornettist of all time.

These recordings were all made originally by Columbia between August 1928 and June 1935, the earlier examples using the Western Electric system and the later, Columbia's own Blumlein system. They were issued under Columbia, Regal and Regal-Zonophone labels.

The transfers have been engineered by John Wadley and Bob Jones and although a modern reprocessing method has been employed the whole is not, of course, equal to a modern l.p. recording. On the other hand, neither do the tracks reproduce like the original 78s., so for those who admire the old Western Electric sound the transfer may prove somewhat disappointing. However, the virtuosity of the playing is in no way diminished.

The record sleeve gives a full description of the eighteen tracks transferred, with month of recording, composers, arrangers, accompanying orchestras and bands with their conductors, much of this information appearing for the first time. The orchestral conductors were Clarence Raybould and Stanford Robinson and the bands were conducted by Ernest Thorpe, James Oliver and Captain George Miller with the Grenadier Guards (who appeared originally simply as 'a Military Band').

Included with the record is a well-written leaflet, providing a resume of the life, achievements and appointments of Jack Mackintosh, and a little information about his father's musical activities. The playing varies between the brilliantly technical in cadenzas, double octave arpeggios and triple tonguing, and the cantabile and legato of ballad pieces. I can thoroughly recommend this record - Cat HBLP 7502, £6.50 post paid from Robert F.Wray, [REDACTED] Frank Andrews



# Technical Forum

MIKE FIELD

The metal "elbow" which connects the horn to the fixed end of the tone arm of a horn gramophone is one of the more difficult parts to find as collectors will ruefully know. While many reproduction parts are available from suppliers, the elusive elbow is not one of them presumably due to the difficulty of manufacture. Most metal workers would say that the elbow is virtually impossible to make with hand tools. So, how was it made originally?

One method used involved stamping out two halves of the elbow shape and soldering them together to make the whole. Another, more widespread method used a process known as deep drawing where a relatively thick disc is forced into the desired shape using a number of successive drawing dies under high pressure. The dies are designed to force the flat blank through an opening or cavity of the required shape at the same time confining the metal between the drawing surfaces so that the change in form is accomplished without wrinkling or buckling. A deep cylinder is where the length is perhaps five times the diameter, cannot be produced in one drawing operation. Several operations are required with the metal being annealed each time. For a gramophone horn elbow, a disc about 6 inches in diameter and .050 in thick is subjected to five drawing and annealing operations to produce a cylinder closed at one end about 1in in diameter and about 4in long. Next the bend is formed hydraulically using the fixture illustrated in Fig.1 which shows the bottom half. The fixture is in two halves with the required shape machined out in each half so that when clamped together the complete shape is formed. The drawn cylinder is placed in the position shown and water at 1200 pounds per square inch is applied to the open end to force it around the bend. A second fixture incorporating the final tapered conical shape is used in a similar manner to expand the straight cylinder to the desired shape.

The production process required no less than eight dies, jigs and fixtures involving the use of expensive presses and hydraulic equipment. It is therefore easy to see why the method cannot be used for small numbers. However all this is of academic interest - what can be done to complete that cherished machine?

Well, it is possible to have a casting made in (say) aluminium but it necessarily will be thick walled and look clumsy. A section cut from the cygnet bend of a 1920s wireless horn can provide a reasonable likeness particularly if it is made of thin steel. If you are not too fussy and only want to make the machine work, large gas or water fittings made of brass or copper can be adapted. However if you want an exact copy one practical method is known as copper forming.

The process is not unlike that used in the production of gramophone records. A wax master is coated with an electrically conducting chemical and copper is deposited on the surface for several hours until the required thickness is "grown". We can use the same principle to make almost any difficult hollow piece such as tone arms, cylinder mandrels and of course, the elbow.

First, like Mrs. Beaton, obtain a genuine elbow for the machine in question by turning the charm on a (hopefully) willing owner. Blank off the ends with suitable plugs so that they are flush with the edges of the elbow. Next we need a suitable container for a moulding box. In plan view it should be large enough to accommodate the elbow (placed sideways) with about half an inch all round. For common elbow dimensions you will probably need an open ended wooden box about 5in by 4in in plan by about 4in in height internally. Carefully saw it in half to produce a 5 by 4 by 4 part with a closed end and a 5 by 4 by 4 open ended part. Plane off the sawn edges and ensure that the two halves fit together without any gap. Position the elbow in the closed end part in a sideways position so that one half lies below the top of



the box and the other half protrudes above. Fix in this position with suitable supports which must not touch the bottom half of the elbow. Next prepare a mixture of Plaster of Paris (obtainable from Chemists). It should not be too wet or sloppy, but on the other hand it must be capable of being poured. When satisfied with the consistency, pour the plaster into the moulding box until the surface is level with edges. Leave to dry for 48 hours and then check that the elbow can be lifted out to leave a clean smooth impression of the elbow half. The mould half will have a similar appearance to the diagram in Fig 1 although of course in this case the shape will be different. Replace the elbow and place the open half of the box over the filled bottom half and mark the sides so that it can be taken off and replaced in exactly the same position. Obtain two rods about 2in long (1/2in wooden dowel rod will do admirably) and push them through holes cut in 1in wide strips of card or wood. Lay the strips over the open top of the moulding box and adjust the position of the rods so that one just touches the highest point of the elbow and the other just touches the opposite (lower) end. Clamp the two halves of the box together and seal them with cellotape to prevent leakage and fill the top half with plaster. Leave to dry for 48 hours. Remove the elbow and the two rods. You should see a good impression of the desired shape with two clean holes rising to the surface of the plaster. Some elbows, eg G&T Monarchs, have a clamping ring soldered to the small end and in this case the impression of the ring will appear. If so, carefully fill it in using more plaster or plasticine. Clamp the two halves of the mould together making sure the locating marks line up to complete the mould.

To make a pattern from the mould we need some low melting point material which can be metal or non-metal. Wood's metal, one form of which is known as CERROBEND or CERROFORM, melts in boiling water and is quite suitable. Another very good material comes from the Dentist; known as dental wax it is used when taking gum patterns for the making of false teeth. It also melts in hot water. At a pinch a wax candle might do although the melting point is a bit high. Once you have obtained suitable low melting point material, pour it very slowly and carefully through the hole connecting to the lower point of the moulding until it starts to run out of the vent tube. Leave to set for 24 hours. If all has gone well you should have a solid wax or metal pattern of the original hollow elbow. The surface should be nice and smooth but if not, use emery cloth and a file on metal or a sharp blade as a scraper on wax. In either case use metal polish on the pattern to produce a very smooth surface. The copper forming process will produce an exact copy of the surface of the pattern including all scratches, bumps or dents so a good surface is very important. Remember the outside dimension of the pattern will become the inside dimension of the copper formed elbow which will therefore be bigger than the original. Very often this does not matter but where the elbow end fits into a socket the copper formed elbow will not fit. In these cases you will need to reduce the dimensions of the pattern by twice the intended thickness of the copper forming. Once satisfied with the dimensions and finish of the pattern fit two discs made of insulating material (Perpex is good) to either end of the pattern as shown in Fig 2.

The finished pattern is now ready for copper forming. Most industrial estates include a plating works and many of these will do copper forming so it should not be too difficult to get the job done at a modest cost. If however you want to try yourself the pattern (but not the discs) should be coated with a conducting material such as Silver Nitrate and a suitable electrical connection made to it. The prepared pattern is then placed in a copper bath for a time calculated to give a wall thickness of .025 in. The surface of the copper should be bright and smooth if you did your preparation properly but if some imperfections still show they can be cleaned off with emery cloth. When satisfied with the result, the whole thing is immersed in boiling water to melt out the wax. This is the reason for the low melting point material; it makes it a practical home operation and prevents damage to the copper



shell due to excess heat.

Some filing up of the edges of the new elbow may be necessary and in the case where a clamping ring is fitted one must be constructed and soldered in the correct place. Any holes or slots present in the original can now be made. Finally give the whole thing a thorough polish and take it for nickel plating. The plating is needed for two reasons; it makes it look pretty but just as important the addition of a very thin nickel skin greatly increases the stiffness and strength of the elbow.

The copper forming process can be very useful to collectors. If there is enough interest, a future article could describe how to use the process to make a 5in mandrel for Concert cylinder phonographs.

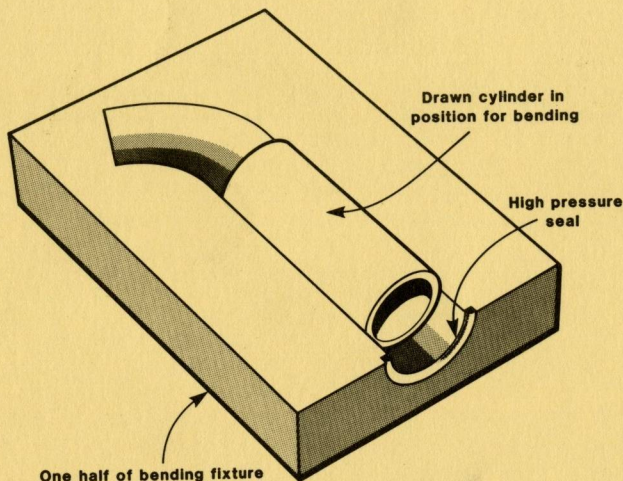


Figure 1

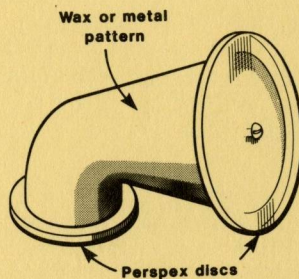


Figure 2

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